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SCIENTIFIC MIND AT WORK ON INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CPYRGHT From Our Washington Correspondent

The American experience could not have much helped President Johnson in the selection of a new Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Mr. Allen Dulles was a professional spy and the departing Director, Mr. John McCone, was a Republican member of the American industrial-administration establishment. Vice-Admiral William Raborn, a retired officer of the United States Navy, whose appointment was announced this week, is a Texan, but one would like to think that he was chosen by Mr. Johnson, who apart from being a Texan is something of a traditionalist, because of the connexion between sailors and intelligence.

The Zimmermann telegram, perhaps the most important victory in intelligence history, was deciphered in 1917 in the British Admiralty. The mysterious M, who directs James Bond, 007, and other agents, of her Majesty's secret service, is also a former naval person. Thus in fact and fiction the precedent is well-established. It is to be hoped that the British experience will well serve the President and the C.I.A.

Admiral Raborn, who is 59, appears not to have had any intelligence experience. A naval flying officer of scientific inclination who graduated from Annapolis in 1928, he spent many of his service years on board aircraft carriers and retired in 1962 as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations. He also served as director of the Fleet Ballistic Missile System, and in developing the Polaris submarine was responsible for providing a new strategic role for the United States Navy and now the Royal Navy.

His moment of glory came when the first Polaris submarine went on station years

before the scheduled time. There can be no doubt that scientific background, drive and administrative ability were responsible for this remarkable feat, and perhaps for the dismay of a former British Defence Minister. It must be assumed that the luckless Skybolt would not have been chosen instead of the Polaris for Britain's main strategic weapon if the talents of Admiral Raborn had been better known.

He moves from the Aerojet-General Corporation, where he was vice-president and programme manager, to the palatial office complex at McLean, Virginia, at a time when the C.I.A. is not under fire. It is not always so. The agency's dismal role in the 1961 Cuban invasion is well known. Suspicion remains not only because the agency is secret and expensive but because of the criticism that an agency responsible for collecting and assessing intelligence should not also be responsible for clandestine operations.

SUCCESS ESSENTIAL

There is little opposition to these operations. If a Latin American government has to be toppled, there will be little objection to the C.I.A. doing the toppling, as it has done in the past, on the condition that it is successful. Perhaps it could be argued that this acceptance of covert interference in the affairs of other nations is more unhealthy than the absence of any division of function, but the argument will not be listened to here. Lesser nations must accept that the United States retains the right to interfere as the Soviet Union and China support so-called wars of liberation.

This is the murky framework within which Admiral Raborn is now to work. His new Deputy Director, Mr. Richard Helms, was deputy director for planning in the agency. Thus President Johnson has not only maintained the balance between the civil and the military within the C.I.A. and continued his practice of promoting deserving professionals to offices normally reserved for political appointments; he has also given the admiral an experienced technician in clandestine operations.

Admiral Raborn is certainly well placed, because of his service background, to achieve a larger measure of coordination. Since the passage of the National Security Act of 1947, which set up the C.I.A., a new intelligence empire has emerged, the Defence Intelligence Agency, and the links between the two are said to be tenuous.

